

STATE OF NEW YORK  
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
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**The New York State Division of Human Rights, Villa Maria College, and Buffalo Developers Work Together to Resolve Housing Discrimination Claims, Resulting In Open and Affordable Renovated Housing for Community Residents and Students in Western New York**

The New York State Division of Human Rights and Buffalo developer, Mark Chason, announced a settlement to resolve a housing discrimination complaint that had been filed by the Division late last year. The settlement came after months of negotiations and will ensure the development of hundreds of newly-renovated and affordable apartments for residents of the Buffalo-Cheektowaga region and students from area colleges. The Division, the College, and the developers lauded the settlement as an example of government working closely with the private sector to create fair and open housing in Western New York.

The settlement grew out of a Division complaint about the planned conversion of the largest residential complex in the Buffalo region into a private, gated student housing facility. The complaint alleged violations of the New York Human Rights Law, by promoting segregation and discrimination in housing based on familial status, race, ethnicity, and/or age. After these issues were raised, the College and developers were interested in negotiating a resolution that would meet both the requirements of the New York Human Rights Law and the local housing needs.

Kumiki Gibson, the Division's Commissioner, stated: "The Division is charged with ensuring that all New Yorkers have fair, non-discriminatory access to housing opportunities, and that developments do not perpetuate or exacerbate segregation. The settlement reached today is the product of a thoughtful collaboration that meets the housing needs of a growing university community, while furthering the goal of providing fair, accessible, and integrated housing to New Yorkers. We applaud Mr. Chason and Villa Maria College for their efforts in making this

project a reality and in demonstrating that private housing development can be open and accessible."

Mark Chason, President of Affinity Renewal Development LLC, and the driving force behind the converted development, also applauded the settlement and the settlement process: "We have spent decades serving the housing needs of residents in the Buffalo region, and it was never our intent to create a project that would unfairly exclude anyone. We worked tirelessly with the Division to devise a new project that would both serve the housing needs of local colleges and universities, while also providing a beautiful new housing complex at affordable rates for families in the area. This is the result of a great collaboration with the Division, and I am extremely excited about the new housing opportunities we are creating for a broad range of Western New Yorkers."

AHF-WNY Student Housing, LLC and AHF Buffalo Housing, LLC, entities that have the respective missions of student housing and affordable housing, will operate the new facility. This facility will be an open, mixed-use residential complex, with approximately 126 renovated affordable housing units designated for individuals and families, and approximately 528 units available for students and members of the academic community in Western New York. All tenants will enjoy free access to new educational and recreational facilities, including a new wading pool and gymnasium. In addition, all area residents will be able to take classes and participate in activities at these educational and recreational facilities, either for free or for a small fee.

As Commissioner Gibson noted, "Finalizing and signing this settlement agreement is a perfect way to begin Fair Housing Month, and I look forward to the ribbon-cutting, celebrating with the College, the developers, and the community residents."

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*New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen "an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life." The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division's website at [www.dhr.state.ny.us](http://www.dhr.state.ny.us) for additional information about the agency and its work.*